DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 369 078 CS 214 276

AUTHOR Ryan, Thomas J.
TITLE Collaborative Development of a Cohesive, Systematic Writing Evaluation Model for Grades 6-12.
PUB DATE 93
NOTE 63p.; Ed.D. Practicum, Nova University.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Cooperation; *Cooperative Planning; Guidelines; Intermediate Grades; Models; Secondary Education; *Student Evaluation; Writing Achievement; *Writing Evaluation
IDENTIFIERS Authentic Assessment

ABSTRACT

A practicum addressed the problem of a lack of continuity and consistency in the evaluation of students' papers in grades 6-12. A cohesive, systematic writing evaluation model was designed and implemented for grades 6-12. Teachers, administrators, students, and community members collaborated in the development and implementation of the writing evaluation model. Students and language arts teachers were trained in the utilization of the writing evaluation model. As a result of using the model, teachers and students became both more involved in the process of writing and more consistently effective communicators about the evaluations of students' papers. Having a clearly defined set of guidelines added continuity and consistency to the school's writing program. (Contains 24 references; faculty and student evaluation forms, the writing evaluation student response form, and the student rating scale are attached.) (RS)

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ED 369 078

Collaborative Development of a Cohesive, Systematic Writing Evaluation Model for Grades 6-12

by

Thomas J. Ryan

Cluster 56

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A Practicum I Report Presented to the
Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Nova University

1993

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This practicum report was submitted by Thomas J. Ryan under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed. D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

Jan. 17, 1994
Date of Final Approval of Report

William W. Anderson, Ed.D.

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ABSTRACT

Development of a Cohesive, Systematic Writing Evaluation Model for grades 6-12. Ryan, Thomas J., 1993: Practicum Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. Writing Evaluation/Model for Evaluation/Assessment of Student Writng/Program for Evaluation of Student Writing.

This practicum addressed the problem of a lack of continuity and consistency in the evaluation of students' papers in grades 6-12. A cohesive, systematic writing evaluation model was designed and implemented for grades 6-12.

This writer directed the collaborative efforts of teachers administrators, students, and community members in the development and implementation of the writing evaluation model. This writer also directed the training of all students and language teachers in utilization of the writing evaluation model.

As a result of using the model, teachers and students became both more involved in the process of writing and more consistently effective communicators about the evaluations of students' papers. Having a clearly defined set of guidelines added the continuity and consistency to the school's writing program.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Community

This rural Midwest of 5,000 community contains 12 industries which employ many of the residents. The proximity to an interstate highway allows some of the residents to work at jobs in the urban areas to the south and north. The community is about 50% rural and 50% small-town residential; the school district's population has remained stable at about 10,000, with 560 population at the high school level. The educational facilities include two public elementary schools, one private elementary school, one high school, and the private college. The relationship among the community businesses, the educational institutions, and the community residents is very positive and constructive. The cooperativeness among the three make possible many festivities that continually promote community awareness and cohesiveness.

About 85% of the community have completed high school and about 20% have college degrees; less than 2% of the adults have not completed eighth grade. Ninety four percent of the present senior high school class have attended this

town's high school for all 4 years; this represents the average stability for continuous enrollment. The majority of administrative and teaching faculty have been employed in the school system for at least 20 years.

Writers' Work Setting and Role

This writer teaches high school English and chairs the school system's language department in this rural Midwest town. Within the past 23 years this educator has taught at the middle school level, the high school level, and the college level. Currently, he teaches high school English and methodology for teaching English at the local private college as an adjunct faculty member.

This writer has served in many capacities in 23 years of service in the educational community: coach of three sports, director of school plays, chair of school philosophy committee, chair of teacher evaluation committee, co-director of substance abuse prevention committee, director of adult education for community, vice - president of local teachers' organization, and chair of language department. This writer has worked in the leadership role for the high school language department for 2 years and realizes that

one's continuous positive approach to learning and one's close working relationship with other language department members are necessary to accomplish what is best for the students and teachers. This writer has established many goals for the department; however, an immediate goal had related to students' writing and to teachers' evaluation of the students' writing. As language department chair, this writer sought to initiate, coordinate, and articulate a cohesive, systematic writing evaluation program for grades 9-12.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

As a teacher of language and as a two year department chairperson and coordinator of language teaching, this writer believes that a problem existed in the educator's high school writing program that affected both the continuity of the high school writing program and the students' understanding of writing evaluations.

Most students in English language writing classes did not understand the meaning of an evaluative grade for their writing; consequently, students, many times, did not see the relevancy of their writing. The students' cognitive and affective "maps" seemed to be either disregarded by the teachers generally in their writing evaluation or recognized superficially by a grade, a demonstration that the students had written or learned something.

The language teachers in the high school did not know the evaluative criteria used by their collegues. Furthermore, individual teachers did not evaluate student writing consistently. Consequently, any continuity in evaluation of student writing among the four levels (9th,

10th, 11th, 12th) did not exist. Due to this lack of consistent, meaningful writing evaluative criteria, the teachers and students did not share a clearly defined purpose, either in writing a particular assignment or for participating in a systematic writing program.

A cohesive, systematic evaluative writing model was not in place for teachers either as a language department or as individual writing teachers. As a result, a non-existent writing evaluation model adversely affected both the continuity of the high school writing program and the students' understanding of writing evaluations.

Problem documentation

In seven individual interviews (only teachers in the language department), all teachers stated that they did not systematically evaluate student writing consistently; furthermore, all teachers agreed that not only teachers but also students need a writing evaluation program that adds continuity to the high school writing program, grades 9-12. In seven individual written surveys (see Appendix A) all teachers agreed that more sharing of ideas about evaluation of student writing was needed. Teachers also remarked that

more student interest to write and more respect for writing were needed. Also five of seven teachers said that they spent too much time "correcting students'" mistakes during their evaluation of students' writing and that this evaluative method seemed meaningless to students.

In 302 individual student oral interviews and 65 personal questionnaires (see Appendix B) from randomly chosen students, 16 from each class (9-11) and 17 from the senior class, all students agreed that their understanding of any teacher's grade for writing was, at best, a guess; all agreed that an A meant "really good," or a B meant "above average," or a C meant "average," or a D meant "below average."

Also in two focus group discussions of 3 students from each grade level chosen randomly, all students consistently mentioned three significant issues: first, writing teachers generally did not tell students what was expected for writing assignment content; second, teachers in the language department did not relate the meaning for their evaluation or even their comments; third, students could submit some writings to different teachers and expect (and had received) different grades.

Causative Analysis

The lack of continuity in the high school writing program and the students' not understanding the meaning of teachers' writing evaluations stemmed from causes that were interrelated. First, teachers in the language department had not collaborated to ensure awareness of each other's evaluative criteria for writing. For many years the same teachers had taught at the same grade level without communicating either about the teaching of writing or about the evaluation of students' writings.

Language departmental meetings, generally, consisted of the language chair relaying information either about state guidelines for education or about administrative concerns from the principal. Discussions concerning teachers' or students' classroom activities rarely occurred. This lack of sharing perpetuated the teachers' isolation from one another thereby creating an atmosphere in which teachers, even within the same grade level of instruction, were unaware of their colleagues' specific content instruction and methodology, particularly as related to writing evaluation.

Secondly, teachers, individually or as a whole, did not have a systematic model for evaluating students' writing. The students, at all grade levels, were aware of teacher's inconsistent writing evaluations; furthermore, the

inconsistencies in writing evaluations were both accepted by the students in a nonchalant attitude of indifference ("That's the way it goes!") and perpetuated by teachers who used an imperious explanation ("That's just because we grade differently!") to buffer any comments about the inconsistencies in their evaluations of students' writings. Third, and most significant, the initiative to develop a cohesive, systematic evaluation writing program had never been taken.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

Many of the complexities both in teaching writing and in the evaluation of student's writing are due to negotiating both which methodology to use and which writing skills to emphasize for each writer or for each group of writers; furthermore, the act of writing is, in a sense, the art of negotiating ideas and skillfully managing those ideas into the written word (Dyson & Freedman, 1991).

So many times the teacher of writing negotiates and judges not before "the skeptical eye of the world, but alone" (Majesky, 1993, p. 88). The evaluation writing grade is seldom neither questioned by the student nor discussed by the teacher. Often the teacher's writing instruction is

abruptly halted when the assignment is given to the students and is resumed when the students, at a designated time and place, submit the writing to the teacher for evaluation. After the teacher diligently evaluates the students' writings, students' interest in revision may occur, but more often the writing grades and/or comments stand. The students then ready for the next writing assignment, usually one of the teacher's preference (Newkirk, 1991).

The lack of collaboration and understanding between the teacher and student about both the writing process itself and the evaluation of the writing is inherent in the belief that grading papers is actually the teaching of writing. However, few students actually read the many analytic comments and even fewer are able to benefit from those remarks on succeeding writing assignments (White, 1985).

The grades for writings are often supported by the teacher's cryptic comments; the students who do read the comments may not understand them (Hahn, 1981) because the comments either are mysterious codes for meaningful criticism (in the teacher's mind) or are overgeneralized and uninterpretable remarks (Sommers, 1982). Too often writing evaluation is a procedure to verify instruction rather than a method to enhance teaching and learning (Bishop, 1989). The result is that the evaluation of students' writings is a

time-consuming and frustrating procedure for teachers and an ephemeral and meaningless experience for the students.

The failure of writing teachers to collaborate about teaching writing and, particularly, about the evaluative criteria for student writing evaluations ensures fragmentation not only between teacher and student-writer but also throughout the writing program (Whichard et al., 1992). Indeed, consensus not only about what good writing is but also about meaningful evaluation or measurement is very difficult to achieve with collaboration (Raymond, 1982). What is known about writing evaluation today, generally speaking, is more than was realized 30 years ago. Still, there is not a definitive answer for teachers seeking to develop a writing evaluation model.

Today, the teachers of writing who seek to make meaningful evaluations for students' writings strive to make clear that the evaluation of students' writing must reflect the complex nature not only of the writing process itself but also of the work of teaching writing and learning writing skills (White, 1990). The dialogue among teachers of writing and their students is a strong foundation model if students are to understand that writing is a complex process. Collaboration both during that writing process and during the evaluation of the finished product is a key for a successful writing program.

The absence of collaboration is detrimental because students do not clarify the meaning of any evaluative comments; students know only the grade, not the reason for the grade (Freedman, 1987). Without a response or a dialogue, such as group editing sessions or group revising sessions, that responds to the writing content or the meaning of the evaluation, students will continue to write without focus, understanding, or implementation of what is needed for them to be successful writers and evaluators of their writing (Nystrand & Brandt, 1989).

Furthermore, teachers who continue to evaluate students' writing without considering the interaction of thought, feeling, and the environment of the writer during the writing process may lack a quality evaluation that is instructive and meaningful for the student (Bishop, 1989). Moreover, the failure both to make student -- writers explore the full range of communicative possibilities during the writing process and consider the demands of audience makes any evaluation of that writing provincial (Fenwick, Peters, & Guyon, 1993).

The absence of a cohesive, systematic writing evaluation model is causatively related to a point of view in which the implementation of a writing evaluation model is

not considered a field in itself (Roemer, Schultz, & Durst, 1991). The teachers' evaluation model must be a reflection of the knowledge of the student, and writing teachers must find manageable writing evaluative measures to implement (Bishop, 1989). Without the collaborative effort which considers both teachers' methodologies and students' idiosyncracies, a meaningful evaluation writing program will not emerge (Dyson & Freedman, 1991).

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

Improving the writing evaluation program directly affects both the teachers and students. The following goal and outcomes were projected for this practicum: develop a cohesive, systematic writing evaluation program both so teachers may use and communicate consistently the evaluative criteria and so students may understand the meaning of the evaluations for their writings and use the evaluation model in their papers.

Expected Outcomes

The outcomes for the evaluation writing program will affect both teachers and students and some community members. First, a committee of teachers, students, and community members will be formed to develop the criteria for a writing evaluation program for grades 9-12. Secondly, the committee will publish the writing evaluative model for dissemination to all high school students. Third, all seven writing teachers in the English language department will give their students a written copy of the evaluation writing

criteria as developed by the committee and will explain the writing evaluation model to their students and designated community members. Students, in turn, working in small student groups and using a one-on-one dialogue, will orally explain the writing evaluation program to their respective writing teachers; furthermore, students will explain the writing evaluation model to one another while monitored by the writing teacher, a designated student, or a designated community member.

Fourth, self-reports by the writing teachers and the department chair's review of representative samples of students' graded written work will indicate that all writing teachers consistently use the evaluation writing model to grade students' writings. Fifth, teachers will effectively use benchmark papers to evaluate students' writing as evidenced by an 80% level of agreement as to the quality level when independently evaluating any given piece of writing.

Furthermore, the teachers, will consistently use the writing evaluation criteria to grade students' papers; students will use the writing evaluation program to grade both their own papers and other students' writings; designated community members will be used by teachers and students to help evaluate students' papers.

Measurement of Outcomes

Each writing teacher will disseminate copies of the writing evaluation program to their students; the dissemination will be monitored by the language chair, the principal, and the assistant principal to ensure that each student receives a copy of the writing evaluation program and that designated community members also receive a copy of the writing evaluation program. During the language teachers' explanations of the writing program with their students, the language chair or the principal or the assistant principal or designated community members will observe, in person, the explanations and assist the teachers in answering any questions from the students to ensure that the responses are in accord with the writing evaluation program criteria.

To ensure that the writing evaluation model is both understood and can be demonstrated by the students, two avenues will be pursued. Students will meet in focus groups to discuss their perceptions of the writing evaluation model; students also will independently evaluate papers according to the writing evaluation model.

Students, 20 chosen randomly from each grade level by one administrator and the language chair, will answer a questionnaire (see Appendix C) about the writing evaluative criteria in their grade level. The chair of the language department will scrutinize the responses for consistency with the writing evaluation model to indicate an 80% level of agreement at all four levels, 9-12.

To ensure that all students understand the writing evaluation model, all students will be interviewed orally one-on-one by their writing teacher to assess their evaluative understanding of the evaluation of their writing. The department chair will randomly choose 48 students from the high school student body, 12 from each grade level; from these 48 students, the department chair, another language department member, and a designated community member will make four focus groups, three students from each level (using no two students with the same writing teacher at the same level) in each focus group to discuss the writing evaluative criteria used by their teachers. Two teachers of writing and the designated community members together will facilitate each focus group's discussion to record an 80% agreement level on each group's discussion topic, the writing evaluator model as a cohesive, systematic writing program.

Furthermore, students' writings, 15 from each grade level, will be selected by the department chair. Among the 15 writings, each evaluative grade, "A" through "F," will be represented equally. Fifteen students, students whose writings are not represented, will be chosen randomly to evaluate those students' writings in a manner consistent with the way in which the teacher, from that grade level, would evaluate that writing. The language department chair and the representative teachers will review the students' evaluation to ensure consistency and understanding of the teachers' evaluation model criteria and document the results in writing to distribute to the members who served on the committee which developed a cohesive, systematic writing evaluation program.

The language chair and two designated committee members will read six student papers, graded by their respective teachers, from each grade level to review for an 80% level of agreement as to quality level using the evaluation writing criteria. A written summary of the review will be sent to each writing teacher by the language chair.

Also 10 students, randomly chosen by a school administrator, from each grade level will self-evaluate their papers in a manner that is consistent with the way their teacher might evaluate the papers. Overall the 40 graders will show an 80% level of agreement with the writing

evaluation model. The results of these self-evaluations will also be documented in writing by the language chair and will be shared orally in writing with committee members and the participating students.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

A non-existent writing evaluation program adversely affected both the continuity of the high school writing program and the students' understanding of the teachers' evaluations for their writings.

Many ambiguities are resolved and some complexities are simplified for students in writing classes if the young writers understand how teachers evaluate their writings. Freedman (1987) maintains that a sound writing evaluation program will enable students to value teachers' advice and learn more easily from both teachers and fellow students.

Thinking about what teachers of writing do when they evaluate students' writings must take into account not only what the teachers say to those students but also what the implications are for the students (Whichard et al., 1992). Many teachers of writing realize the necessity to stress the dialogical nature between writer and teacher in evaluating students' writings. The dialogical process (the give and take - the address and response) inherently expresses the

need for less objectivity overall and more student subjectivity specifically (Raymond, 1982) during writing evaluation.

Solutions to make evaluation of students' writings more meaningful for teachers and students must have teachers who are conversant with students about their "cognitive, affective, and social concerns" (Bishop, 1989, p. 267). This strategical point of view, suggests Lindemann (1982), gives teachers and students a chance, in dialogue with one another, to construct their own standards while confronting not just the teacher's standards but their classmates' standards as well.

The development of a writing evaluation program can be both an empowerment for students and a revitalization for teachers of writing (Bishop, 1989). But, in collaboration to develop a writing evaluation program, the concern about "intruding" on the academic privacies and freedoms of colleagues must receive grave consideration from teachers. The teachers' evaluative ideas should be both a reflection of the knowledge of current workable procedures for evaluation and a reflection of the knowledge of the students' learning methods and writing experiences. Freedman (1987) found that teachers of writing who had

acknowledged that "students have a set of concerns about their writing" (p. 28) help students write if they first listen and respond to the students' issues. Furthermore, the listening and responding becomes the process of evaluation from the onset and continues formatively and summatively. This approach enables writing teachers to find manageable writing evaluation measures that are flexible and instructional (Fenwick et al., 1993). Baumlin and Baumlin (1989) urge the teachers of writing to realize that a critical self-awareness on the evaluators' part for the response to student writings leads to "a truly collaborative, negotiative rhetoric of response" (p. 180).

One way to generate a negotiative evaluation might be to focus on heuristic commentary, which argues that writing be viewed as a problem solving and various sorts of "rational problem-solving techniques (called 'heuristics') can lead to well-developed writing" (White, 1985, p. 177). Baumlin and Baumlin (1989) support the heuristic approach because the evaluators emerge not as error - hunters but as a collaborators in writing who discuss methods to sharpen those effects the writers wish to achieve.

Freedman (1987) points out that the need for response (evaluatively) to students' writings changes as the writers grow. As long as students are writing, evaluation for that

writer never ends. Evaluation for student writing means that through the process the teachers help develop writers who can solve writing problems; as a result, the students develop skills that should enable independent problem solving.

So often the evaluation of students' writings does not involve an ongoing evaluative dialogue during the process of writing. Evaluations often are comments on mechanics which overshadow any comment on students' ideas. An alternative to this restricted type of evaluation, similar to the dialogue a teacher may develop using a heuristic approach when teachers keep folders of their students' writing, is perhaps grading the entire folder or negotiating selected writings to evaluate (Dyson & Freedman, 1991). Using this strategy, both teachers and students work towards developing concepts about "good" writing. Furthermore, as students come to understand the evaluative criteria used by the teachers, they can explain specifically why they chose certain writings to be evaluated. As students become more astute critics of their own writing and the writings of others, they invariably become better writers, concludes editors Lawson, Ryan, and Winterowd (1989).

The use of portfolios provides a strategy of assessment that "dovetails neatly with the process theories about

writing" (Roemer et al., 1991, p. 455). The effectiveness of using portfolio evaluation addresses a changed attitude about teaching and judging writing. The portfolio solution negates the practice of students' writing in pieces, product by product, which actually violates the very things we teach about writing. Roemer et al. found that teachers who successfully used the portfolio as a mode of assessment "liked the idea of working as a group to establish evaluation standards" (p. 465). Furthermore, the portfolio assessment provided a "fairer and more accurate way" (p. 466) of evaluating the students' writings than the traditional grading system - the error - finder, analytic grading of students' papers. White (1985), too, cautions against the analytic grading because of reduced effectiveness. The confrontational atmosphere is buried with metaphors of violence, "teachers tearing their papers apart" or "bleeding all over them" (p. 123). As a result, the chance that students' writing will receive a wide variety of teacher responses is increased and students are likely to see evaluation as a matter of chance or personal taste. White suggests that if teachers want to incorporate an analytical tool, among the best is the scale developed by Cooper and Tell.

Other evaluation procedures that are useful for helping teachers develop standards of writing are the "holistic"

approaches. These scoring guides can be based on scales of 4 points, 5 points, 6 points, 9 points, and 15 points. Odd-numbered scales offer a midpoint, which some evaluators argue is an easy way out for the readers/judges. The advantage of holistic scoring guides is that most call attention to what is done well; however, students must know what the guides mean. One way to inform the students is to have the students help develop the guide; another way is for the teacher to distribute the guide and then grade papers as a pre-writing activity (White, 1985). Furthermore, the use of holistic scoring guides enables the students to internalyze the standards for evaluation.

Another scoring strategy, primary trait scoring, is conceptually the same as holistic scoring. A carefully planned primary trait scoring allows for more narrow judgments: the guide enables the teacher to evaluate the specific aspects directly connected to classroom teaching and student understanding.

In the literature about evaluation of students' writings, one critical point is mentioned repeatedly: successful teachers are guides who resist taking over the writing of their students. Another solution, generally suggested, is that successful teachers of writing and

student writers take time during the writing process to evaluate the writing according to an agreed upon criteria. In some cases teachers do rely on peer groups for responses to writings, (Vatalaro, 1990); in other instances teachers utilize individual conferences with the student-writers. Berger (1991) stresses that the teachers of writing must be goal-oriented so as "to involve (all) students in a method of critique that is precise and constructive" (p. 36). For example, dialogue with students who are keeping folders of their writing must include their ways of writing and their reasons for change in process and product "over time and across kinds of writing activities" (Dyson & Freedman, 1991, p. 758).

Clear definitions for assignments, well-stated criteria for evaluation, and understandable strategies in the writing program make the work of helping students know about evaluating writing more effective (White, 1985). Students, in turn, are better able to reach beyond short-term goals of revision and improvement for a particular paper to the long range goal of learning to evaluate critically on their own. The evaluative program, itself, must incorporate the same continuity throughout the students' high school years (Beach, 1989).

Description of Selected Solution

Utilizing the recommendations for a successful writing evaluation program gleaned from the literature, this educator, as department chairperson, coordinated the development and implementation of a writing evaluation model. Important points from the review of the literature guided this educator's efforts in an initial "input" meeting with all high school writing teachers to establish procedures both for development and implemention of the writing evaluation model.

Teachers in the language department, administrators, designated students, and designated community members collaborated to develop an evaluation writing model. This department chair also invited the local college writing evaluators to share ideas about the evaluation of student writing. This complementary relationship with community workplace members enabled writing teachers to resist shortsightedness and entrenchment.

During the developmental stages of the writing evaluation program, developers and designated evaluators formatively assessed the writing model. Furthermore, the assessment was done summatively, and the provision was made within the program to meet regularly throughout the year and from year to year to assess the writing evaluation model.

Report of Action Taken

Having reviewed the literature for successful writing evaluation models, this educator, as department chairperson, decided to coordinate the development of a cohesive, systematic writing evaluation model. Helpful points from the review of the literature guided this effort.

Prior to meeting with the language department faculty, a meeting was held with the superintendent and principal to discuss monies needed for substitute teachers for the language faculty, requests to reserve school conference rooms, requests for supplies, and schedules for in-school meetings. This meeting was invaluable. The overview for the three-month's work was outlined; the plan to implement was discussed. Because of administration's interest and support, the implementation of the practicum started as a meaningful collaborative effort for the school system.

During the first week the language chair met with the high school language teachers to discuss the overview of the developmental plan, to evaluate the variables in teaching responsibilities that could conflict or enhance the implementation in the calendar plan, and to accept general

suggestions and recommendations, specifically names of community members and students to serve on the writing evaluation committee.

Also during the first week the language chair contacted three community members and two students, names suggested by faculty, to request their service on the writing evaluation committee.

The original plan was to develop a cohesive, systematic writing evaluation model for grades 9-12; however, during the initial committee meeting, all agreed, after debate and discussion, that for effectiveness, the developmental plan must be extended to include grades 6, 7, and 8. All committee members left the first meeting in agreement: for continuity the committee would develop a model to include grades 6-12.

This did present an additional problem, contacting another principal and four more teachers. With the superintendent's, the high school principal's, and the middle school principal's administrative assistance, the inclusion worked very well.

During the second week a day-long meeting was held. All four middle school language teachers and all seven high school language teachers, two committee community members, and three students met with two members of the local college English department to share ideas about evaluating student

writing. The language chair and the secretary of the high school language department facilitated the meeting, recorded suggestions, and summarized the day's activities. The language chair distributed a typed summary of the meeting to each participating member.

During the meeting mentioned above, the teachers decided to assign, during the third week, a writing of explanatory discourse to all students. The writing was a designated topic, one common to all grade levels. During the seventh week the committee used these papers in developing the writing evaluation program.

For the next two weeks four meetings took place. At the first meeting, all middle and high school language teachers, two community members, and two students were present. The language chair had invited a writing evaluation expert to speak about the various writing evaluation models used throughout the United States. This meeting was scheduled for one day; the substitutes were provided by the administration.

During the afternoon session one of the administrators participated in the meeting for two hours. The discussions had progressed so well that the committee invited the speaker to stay for another day. The speaker agreed, and the administrator approved the extension and supplied the

substitutes for all teachers. However, only one community member and one student were able to remain for the second day. The action taken during this deviation from the plan ignited the spark of homogeneity among the committee members; furthermore, the action of the administration enhanced the overt support for the committee's work.

The language chair scheduled a follow-up "supper seminar" the next day in his home to review the two-day's activities. At this informal supper, the discussion of the writing evaluation model was the first time the committee members initiated a preference for any evaluation model or program. The committee agreed to meet twice within the next week to discuss the writing evaluation criteria and the format for a writing evaluation model.

Both meetings, which lasted three hours, were held after school. At the second meeting the committee did agree on the format for the writing evaluation model but did not prioritize the criteria for the format.

The difficulty in establishing criteria, or at least in agreeing which criteria to use in a holistic/analytic approach, dissipated once we started using student writing samples in our discussions. We, to this point, had not been using the students' papers, and our arguments remained inevitably in the theoretical arena; the student papers

impelled the committee more to the concretization of the evaluative model.

During the next two weeks, the committee established the criteria and formalized the writing evaluation model in writing. So, by week six the committee decided that the writing teachers, grades 6-12, would explicate the writing evaluation model to 105 randomly selected students, 15 from each grade level. The names were drawn, and the 15 students gathered in a conference room to listen to the explication.

Each grade level, one at a time, received a copy of the writing evaluation model and instruction how to use the model. After instruction and discussion the students evaluated papers "to test" their understanding of the evaluative model. This phase, which the teachers accomplished in four days, was crucial for two reasons: first, the teachers were able to test their presentation of the writing evaluation model; second, the students could ask questions and "play" with the model without being compromised by the classroom time schedule.

During the seventh week the entire language faculty explained the criteria to the rest of the students. Each explanation lasted for three class periods in which students "practiced" the evaluation model.

Also during this week the teachers collected the writings that were assigned during the second week of the practicum. Each paper was evaluated by the teacher and one other committee member and then given to a select sub-committee made up of the language chair and two volunteers from the writing evaluation committee. This sub-committee identified "benchmark" papers to ensure all writing evaluators were "speaking the same language."

When the teachers returned all the papers, the students conferred with one another and the teacher to assess their understanding of the evaluative criteria.

Another committee meeting took place at the beginning of the week 9. Discussion of "benchmark" papers and feedback from teachers occupied the agenda. The committee agreed to make a few adjustments in the writing evaluation model before finalyzing the program.

The teachers, during week 10, assigned a one page explanatory discourse writing to their students. At the end of the week, the students submitted their papers, and the teachers and designated students evaluated the students' writing according to the writing evaluation model.

The teachers returned the students' papers after each paper was read by two of the committee evaluators. A third evaluator read the paper if the two readers disagreed by

more than .5 of a point. The department chair and two of the committee members then randomly selected 10 students from each grade level, 6-12, to participate in seven focus groups, one group per grade level, to determine if the students' understandings of the writing evaluation model were consistent. The committee also distributed to 15 randomly selected students from each grade level (excluding the ones from focus groups) two written questionnaires (see Appendix C and Appendix D) about the writing evaluation model. These students also self-evaluated their papers in a manner consistent with the writing evaluation model. The language chair then summarized the findings and shared those with the committee, the administration, and students.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND DISSEMINATION

Results

As a teacher of language and as a department chairperson and coordinator of language teaching, this writer believes that a problem existed that adversely affected both the continuity of the school's writing program and the students' understanding of writing evaluations. A cohesive, systematic evaluating writing model was not in place for teachers either as a language department or as individual writing teachers. The solution was to develop a writing evaluation model for grades 6-12 by involving teachers, administration, students, and community members.

The first outcome, to form a committee of teachers, students, and some community members to develop the criteria for a writing evaluation program for grades 9-12, successfully occurred in the first week of the practicum. The writing evaluation program, initially, was for grades 9-12; however, the committee's first efforts changed the goal to include grades 6-12.

The committee then developed the writing evaluative criteria and accomplished both the second outcome when they published the writing evaluative model and the third outcome when they disseminated the model in class to all middle school and high school students. The students received both the criteria to use for evaluation and an explanation for using the model. The explanatory process involved both written form and oral discussion of the model. The teachers, students, and designated community members worked together successfully to accomplish the third outcome.

The fourth outcome, writing teachers consistently use the evaluation writing model to grade students' writings, occurred as a two-fold result: firstly, teachers' submitted self-reports to the committee; secondly, the department chair, the high school principal, and one committee member reviewed representative samples of students' graded written work for consistency. Of the 105 papers reviewed by the chair, the principal, and the committee member, 92 papers (87%) were consistent with the writing evaluation model.

The fifth outcome, teachers effectively use benchmark papers to evaluate students' writing as evidenced by an 80% level of agreement as to the quality level when independently evaluating any given piece of writing,

was accomplished, in part, during the final week of the practicum. The middle school evaluators did not attain an 80% level of agreement when they evaluated just high school papers nor did the high school evaluators attain an 80% level of agreement when they evaluated just middle school papers. When the high school teachers evaluated 45 middle school papers (15 from each level), they (2 evaluators reviewing one paper) agreed on 26 papers (54%) when the high school teachers evaluated 60 (15 from each level) high school papers, they agreed on 51 papers (84%). When the middle school teachers evaluated 60 (15 from each level) high school papers, they agreed on 40 papers (66%); however, when the middle school teachers evaluated 45 middle school papers, they agreed on 41 papers (91%). Overall, when 105 student papers were distributred equally by grade level to all the teachers, an 86% level of agreement was reached. The expected outcome had been an 80% level of agreement.

Also 15 randomly selected students from each grade level (excluding the ones from the focus groups) self-evaluated their papers according to the writing evaluation model. Of the 105 students self-evaluating the papers, 77 (64%) evaluated the paper consistent with their teacher's

evaluation. This result did not meet the expected outcome of 80% agreement for self-evaluation.

When these same students evaluated other students papers from their same grade level, their perecentage of agreement increased. Of the 105 papers evaluated (students evaluating classmates' papers), 84 students evaluated papers consistent with the teacher's evaluation at the respective grade level. This (81%) did reach the expected level (80%) of agreement when grading other students' papers.

Discussion

In the school system where this writer teaches, many gifted teachers of writing work; however, these gifted teachers and gifted-to-be teachers of writing became victims of chaos without a cohesive, systematic writing evaluation model. To find some common ground and to instill some ownership in the practicum, this writer, at the first meeting, initiated a discussion about the victimization of teachers, particularly related to the teaching of writing. The discussion centered around the number of hours the teachers dedicated to the evaluation of students' papers. One of the three community members sat totally absorbed listening to the teachers talk about how much time they use

for grading papers. This community member, after 20 minutes of teachers' volumnous victimization stories, calmly interjected, "You all have got to get together!" Silence filled the room! Then each, in his or her own way, smiled acknowledgment; a realization had permeated the meeting. Being alone can be very frustrating amidst a stack of ungraded papers, and students can suffer as a result if the burden of evaluation is mainly on the teachers.

The conversation then shifted to what can be done to bring the teachers together in this effort of developing a writing evaluative model. The answer came almost spontaneously from each member: the committee needed to include more teachers, not only from the high school but also from the middle school. After discussion, the committee agreed to include, at this juncture, only the language teachers in grades 6-12 and some students in grades 6-12 to serve on the developmental committee. Actually, the committee ideally wanted to include grades k-12; however, all agreed that 6-12 would be enough work for this three month time period.

The open discussion at the first meeting was crucial because every idea or every suggestion was addressed. Each idea or suggestion was written on a blackboard and

discussed. This writer shared his deep gratitude for the seriousness with which each committee member shared his or her point of view, and all agreed that the committee was on target.

The unanticipated inclusion of grades 6-8 enabled the committee to focus on a more cohesive, systematic writing evaluative model immediately. Their collaborative effort recognized the complementarity between middle school and high school as an integral part of the system. As one community member noted "We need to know more about each other!" the dissonant feeling of aloneness or frustration expressed earlier by the teachers had dissipated. The committee focused more harmoniously on the effort that would enhance not only their teaching but also the students' writing.

The arduous task of developing the writing evaluative model meant many meetings. Part of the success of the practicum is that these meetings were held during school hours. Another crucial asset is that the meetings, although structural, were informal. Some members baked goodies; some brought coffee or soft drinks. The breaking of bread somehow added to the communal atmosphere. At one meeting this writer won the "best goodies" award for his deviled eggs.

The second and third outcomes, publishing and disseminating the writing evaluation model to the students, were reached not so easily, particularly the delivery of the model to the students. Each teacher explained the model while another committee member observed the explanation to the class. The committee wanted to do this as a self check for accuracy. After a few class explanations, some of the committee members suggested that it would be important if the students and teachers should explain the writing evaluation model. We had already, on a formative basis, taught the model to selected students from grades 6-12 (Crowley, 1989).

This idea became the solution to the task of disseminating the model to all the students. Four students used a computer visualization in several classes to enhance the explanation. One community committee member, after seeing the students' work, remarked that the task of collaborative effort in writing may be at the center of eliminating any chaos or aloneness in writing or evaluating papers.

The implications for the above comment soon became apparent in a committee meeting. After a lengthy discussion about collaboration in writing, specifically related to collaborative peer-evaluations, one community committee

member suggested that the business community should develop a writing portfolio for the students and teachers. The portfolio could include various kinds of writing specific to the businesses. The community member suggested that this work could easily be a branch of the writing evaluation committee, offering models that meet the criteria for competency as outlined in the model. This idea has been pursued by a sub-committee of two teachers.

This was another unanticipated outcome that added continuity to the teachers, students, and community as they worked to make the writing assignments for students more meaningful (Davis, Scriven, & Thomas, 1987).

The fourth outcome, teachers use the writing evaluation model, was met with little difficulty. The teachers, informally, "played" with the model by developing both games to teach the writing evaluation model and prizes for groups as they successfully grasped the model. The middle school teachers actually had class competition among grades 6, 7, and 8 to determine how consistent they could evaluate papers using the model. In one competition three teachers were challenged by three students. The rules were set: each group member had to evaluate the five papers (no names) according to the model and record the score with a facilitator (mediator); each paper (15 total) was read by

all three evaluators independently. When the writing evaluation contest was completed, the students had won. The students agreed 13/15 papers; the teachers agreed 11/15 papers. The teachers immediately made the contest a 3/5 challenge. So after the Christmas vacation another contest will take place, and in May the final contest (maybe?). The participants in the contest are already modeling and capturing "the prize," exploring the meaning of writing by coming to a common ground of understanding about writing itself and the evaluation of that writing (Ford, 1991).

The fifth outcome involved both teachers and students grading papers according to the model. Teachers were expected to use benchmark papers to evaluate students' writing as evidenced by an 80% level of agreement as to the quality level when independently evaluating any given piece of writing, but this outcome was a bit compromised by the inclusion of the middle school students.

The committee found that the high school teachers did well when evaluating the high school papers; the middle school teachers performed even better when evaluating the middle school papers. The lack of understanding about what is expected at various grade levels was obvious to the committee. This meant, for the committee, that the writing evaluation model, itself, is not the answer for the

teachers' and the students' to understand what writing evaluation means for various grades. The teachers from various grade levels had been involved in helping each other develop criteria according to grade level. This effort, although not planned, had a very homogenizing effect for the language faculty.

However, overall the teachers evaluated with an 86% (agreeing on 91/105 papers) level when rating papers equally distributed from each grade level. Further discussion about what is developmentally sound, cognitively and emotively, at various grade levels and about what is expected from teachers and students in the writing evaluation must ensue (Beason, 1993). More work about defining the particular grade level expectations for evaluation of students' writings is needed. Furthermore, the students performed very well when grading both their own papers and their classmates' papers. Several students admitted that they read more carefully if they were evaluating others' papers contrasted to their self-evaluation "quick read." All of the 105 students who were randomly chosen agreed that the writing evaluation model added more focus and understanding to evaluation of papers.

The writing evaluation model is in place for grades 6-12; the goal has been accomplished. The model expresses a

cohesive, systematic approach to the evaluation of students' papers. In reviewing the work by all who participated, one must realize that the end product is, in all probability, not the most significant contribution to the school system. Everyone working together, stumbling at times, exploring the "What if?" together, and feeling and hearing the "That's good!" together may have been the most important element in the practicum. The feelings of victimized by chaos or alienation expressed by committee members evaporated along the way.

Recommendations

Certain recommendations may benefit those who seek to develop a similar model:

1. Include community members and students on the committee;
2. Seek outside sources and invite speakers who have experienced the same to share insight;
3. Allow time for committee members to express their point of view openly about writing evaluation and encourage stories about personal experiences as students;
4. Encourage administration to attend all meetings;
5. Meet informally with a set agenda;

6. Make students aware that their input and advice is necessary and have the committee students "pass the word" that writing is crucial for all;
7. Seek to define particulars for grade levels as the development proceeds;
8. Use students' writings as you discuss criteria;
9. Be flexible with meeting times and allow for changes;
10. Take notes (2 people) at each meeting and write a summary and distribute before next meeting;
11. Be patient! Now!

The need to update and improve the writing evaluation model is obvious to the committee. Three months after the completion of the practicum a day long committee meeting will be held to discuss the model. Each committee member will bring a brief journal of discussion topics and suggestions for the writing evaluation model. At the present, the committee is informally canvasing the students and colleagues about starting a writing clinic both at the middle school and high school.

Dissemination

The writing evaluation model has been shared with fellow cluster classmates and with the English department at the local college. This writer has been asked and has agreed to conduct a writing evaluation workshop for three local high schools. This writer, who teaches language arts methods at the local college, will use the model in his teaching methods class not only to evaluate his papers but also to teach an evaluative methodology for students' papers.

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APPENDIX A

FACULTY EVALUATION FORM

FACULTY ADVISORY DATA. Please return to department chairperson by _____

1. Please briefly explain your criteria for evaluating students' writing.

2. Please briefly explain the grading system (criteria) used to evaluate students' writing in grades 9-12.

3. What makes evaluation of students' writing easy and what makes evaluation difficult?

A. Easy

B. Difficult

4. If you were to change anything related to the teaching of writing in this high school, what change would you make?

Why?

Thank you!!!!!

APPENDIX B

STUDENT EVALUATION FORM

STUDENT ADVISORY DATA. Please return to department chairperson by _____

1. Please write the letter grade or other evaluative score for a writing that you submitted in English class.
_____(letter grade) or (other evaluative score)_____
_____

2. Do you, most of the time, understand the writing assignment ? In other words, do you, most of the time, know what you are expected to write? Yes or No (Circle One). If you do not, please briefly explain why.

3. Please explain the criteria used by the teacher to evaluate your writing referred to in #1.

4. Most of the time do you understand what a letter grade for your writing means? Yes or No (Circle One).

Briefly explain.

5. What makes the writing for English class easy? What makes the writing for English class difficult?

A. Easy -

B. Difficult -

Thanks for your help!!!!!

APPENDIX C

WRITING EVALUATION STUDENT RESPONSE

Student Response

1. In the Writing Evaluation Model what is the major difference between a "3" & a "4"?

2. What must you do first when you evaluate any paper?

3. A paper becomes a "2" automatically if:

   1.

   2.

4. Explain, briefly, what you should do if the paper is a "1."

5. What does consistent focus mean in our evaluation model?

APPENDIX D

STUDENT RATING SCALE

Student Rating Scale

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
(1) Description of writing evaluation.					
* In my evaluating of other students' papers reading the entire paper is necessary before I decide on the evaluative rating.	1	2	3	4	5
* Evaluating papers using this model makes my understanding of evaluation clearer than my understanding was last year.	1	2	3	4	5
(2) Value attitude toward processes:					
* Using this evaluation model is a waste of time.	1	2	3	4	5

(3) Beliefs about processes:
Please agree or disagree with the following statements and explain why or give an example.

Agree	Disagree	
____	____	Evaluating using this model makes me realize the importance of focus.
____	____	Realizing the criteria ahead of time for my papers is helpful when I write.
____	____	Evaluation of writing is part of the process of writing.